



Neighborhood Networks Centers and the Child Care Challenge

Access to safe, reliable and affordable child care is a critical component for residents seeking self-sufficiency. Neighborhood Networks centers are addressing child care needs in their communities through a variety of traditional and innovative approaches. A few examples: a center in Charleston, South Carolina has a training program for teens called "Super Sitter." Sponsored by a local 4-H club, the program trains teens on the importance of child care and safety. In Ohio and Maryland, centers have partnerships with Head Start programs that offer residents child care. In Connecticut, centers are working with the New London Housing Authority and the Red Cross to certify teenagers as babysitters.

What recent trends make child care such an important issue for Neighborhood Networks centers?

Recent trends in job growth and child care make the transition from joblessness to employment a challenge.

- **Need for Care During Non-Traditional Hours**
Low-income and entry-level jobs often have non-traditional hours. The National Child Care Survey found that one-fourth of low-income working mothers (incomes above poverty but below \$25,000) work in the evenings or on weekends.¹ Finding child care during these hours is a challenge. A U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) survey in selected cities found that only a small percentage of child care providers offer care during non-traditional hours.²
- **Insufficient Supply**
Millions of welfare recipients expected to find and keep jobs will create an even greater demand for quality and affordable child care as they make the transition from welfare-to-work. In poor neighborhoods, the supply of licensed and appropriate child care providers is far less than in more affluent communities.³

■ High Cost

For many families and single parents, high-quality child care is simply beyond their budgets. Cost is a critical barrier for the growing number of children in low-income families with one or two working parents.

■ Poorly Paid Workforce and Turnover

Child care providers' wages are among the lowest of any profession. Low wages may lead to high turnover and an unstable environment for children.

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and community technology centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 800 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 682 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 07/01

¹ National Child Care Survey, 1991, Urban Institute Press, Washington, DC.

² Welfare Reform: Implications of Increased Work Participation for Child Care, 1997, U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington DC.

³ Ibid.

Why is child care an important component of Neighborhood Networks centers?

Neighborhood Networks centers provide opportunities for residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing to become more self-sufficient. To participate in job training programs, GED classes and ultimately job placement, residents must have access to quality, affordable child care. This can be a challenge for parents juggling complex schedules and insufficient resources. Typically, communities in which centers are located lack a sufficient supply of affordable child care. Many employers and state officials cite child care as a major challenge for workers struggling to find and keep jobs. If residents are to achieve self-sufficiency, child care must be part of the solution—not part of the problem.

How can I get involved?

Government, nonprofit and corporate partners can help residents achieve self-sufficiency by providing child care-related resources.

- **Local governments** can link residents with federal, state and local programs, or provide funding such as subsidies or income tax credits. For example, a center in Alabama has a partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) to provide qualified families with a referral to a DHR child care center.
- **Nonprofit and public housing** partners can share resources and programs and coordinate with centers on grants for child care resources. For example, in New York City, five community-based organizations formed a collaborative to improve the availability and quality of child care in low-income communities. Efforts like this exist all across the country.

Child care is provided in a variety of places:

- Private homes
- Child care centers
- Places of employment
- Schools
- Community centers
- Places of worship

Neighborhood Networks centers can offer these groups access to communities in need of child care and physical space in the center.

- **Private industry** participating in welfare-to-work or job training programs can offer on-site child care or child care subsidies to participants who may later become permanent employees and will need stable child care to remain employed.

For more information, contact:

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